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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: SCIRI DEPUTY SEEKS CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE FROM ARAB
STATES

Classified By: Political Counselor Margaret Scobey for reasons 1.4 (b)
and (d).

Neighbors Conference Presents Opportunity

¶1. (C) In a March 7 meeting with PolCouns, SCIRI CoR member and chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee Humam Hamoudi expressed his optimism about the March 10 Neighbors Conference, saying that if approached in the right way it could be an important step in confirming the new role of Iraq in the region and in enlisting cooperation and support from neighboring countries. At the same time, Hamoudi expressed his fear that recent statements from Amre Mousa and from Arab Foreign Ministers indicated that Sunni Arab states were not yet ready to support the new Iraq but instead were seeking to internationalize Iraq's problems. "We had elections and wrote a constitution," Hamoudi said, with a twinkle in his eye. "If they want the UN Security Council to revise what we have done, then why just interfere in Iraq? Why shouldn't the Security Council also look at the problem of the Shi'a in Saudi Arabia or the Kurds in Syria, and at how those states are governed?" He criticized Arab states for not doing anything constructive to fight the terrorism plaguing Iraq, but instead for taking steps in "a sectarian direction." PolCouns told Hamoudi that she hoped the March 10 conference would lead other states to be more supportive of Iraq's government and democratic process.

Improving the CoR Institutionally

¶2. (C) Turning to the CoR, Hamoudi said that the CoR needed to improve in both its oversight and legislative functions. While the committees could serve as objective, non-partisan focal points for development and review of legislation, he argued, they lacked expertise, and the CoR's leadership, i.e. Speaker Mashhadani, was incapable of effectively managing the legislative process. He proposed that the CoR vote on a yearly basis to renew the mandate of the Speaker, as well as the committee heads. To improve the CoR's oversight function, Hamoudi said he would work to ensure that "one Minister a week" was invited to the CoR for questioning on their performance.

Upcoming Legislation

¶3. (C) Hamoudi said he expected the oil law to be passed by the CoR with perhaps some minor modifications, but that it would take time: "We need to study it, to debate it, to help the people understand it." He agreed with PolCouns that the provincial powers law needed further work to clarify the authorities between the governors and the provincial

councils. Because of Iraq's experience with dictatorship, Hamoudi said, it was important not to give too much power to an executive at this point, be it at the national or provincial level. PolCouns told Hamoudi of the Presidency Council's efforts to draft a compromise deBaathification law and of the proposal to suspend new deBaathification orders until reform legislation was passed. Hamoudi expressed surprise that schoolteachers in Salah al-Din who had received exemptions from deBaathification orders had been unable to return to their employment and suggested that the provincial council find a means of employing them.

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